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RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 3253
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RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA IMMEDIATE 6209
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA IMMEDIATE 8544
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE IMMEDIATE 0022
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO IMMEDIATE 6725
RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI IMMEDIATE 7455
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 TOKYO 002000

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: HISTORIC WIN FOR THE DPJ

REF: A. TOKYO 1987
 [B.](#) TOKYO 1811
 [C.](#) TOKYO 1978

Classified By: Ambassador John V. Roos, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary: The opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ)'s victory on August 30 in the 45th Lower House (House of Representatives) was historic and unprecedented. Alone, the DPJ took 308 out of 480 seats, a record-setting figure. There was also record turnout and interest in the election, which was cast as a choice between change and the status quo.

From high numbers of female winners to ruling party heavyweights whose political careers were abruptly ended, this election has in itself brought about big changes. And there will be more change to come in the following days and weeks, with the new Cabinet yet to be formed, the role of now ruling party bigwigs such as Ichiro Ozawa still undefined, and the future of the formerly ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) still unclear.

Historic Election; Unprecedented Margin of Victory

[¶2.](#) (C) With its August 30 Lower House victory, the DPJ succeeded in breaking the LDP's nearly unbroken hold on political power in postwar Japan. Furthermore, the DPJ's victory represents the first time an opposition party gained power with an overall majority in a general election, as well as the first time any party-ruling or opposition-won more than 300 seats in the 480-seat Lower House. The final tally of seats for the DPJ (308) and LDP (119) reflected a reversal of fortune from the last Lower House election in 2005, when the LDP took 296 seats and the DPJ 113.

[¶3.](#) (C) Because the DPJ, with the help of its partners also in the opposition, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and People's New Party (PNP), already controls the Diet's Upper House, this latest election result means that the DPJ now controls the entire Diet. The 308 seats that it won gives it a comfortable majority (241 is the minimum number of seats required for a majority), but is a few seats short of the 320 "super-majority" that would have given the DPJ the power to override the Upper House on most issues and rely less on cooperation from smaller parties such as the SDP and PNP.

Although DPJ President Yukio Hatoyama has already committed to enter into a coalition arrangement "in some form" with these two parties, the value of cooperation from the SDP and PNP, which won 7 and 3 seats, respectively, has gone down considerably.

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Voters and Those They Elected
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¶4. (C) Disappointed with years of economic stagnation, growing job insecurity, and breakdown of many aspects of the social welfare system, including the loss of millions of pension records, Japanese citizens looked to the DPJ, which had promised "change" and solutions to all of the above and more problems, as the only viable option to the LDP. In record numbers, even LDP supporters voted for the opposition this time. According to the Asahi Shimbun, 30% of LDP backers voted for the DPJ. In contrast, 84% of DPJ supporters voted for the DPJ, with only 2% casting ballots for the LDP. Among voters with no particular party affiliation, 53% voted for the DPJ, versus 15% for the LDP.

¶5. (C) High voter turnout also is thought to have contributed to the DPJ's large margin of victory, as undecided and unaffiliated voters usually vote in larger numbers for the opposition party or for the party with momentum leading up to the election (which this year was the DPJ on both counts). According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, voter turnout for the single-seat

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portion of the election was 69.28% (slightly higher than the 67.51% from the previous Lower House election in 2005), and 69.27% for the proportional representation portion. These figures reflect the highest voter turnout since the introduction in 1996 of the current electoral system. Ballots cast under the early voting system, at 13.40% of the total number of votes cast by election day, was also a record-breaking figure, showing increased public interest in the election.

¶6. (C) As they took their desire for change to the ballot box, the record numbers of Japanese voters created other historical firsts. For example, 53 female candidates (40 from the DPJ, the remaining 13 from other parties) won Lower House seats—the most in Japanese history (the previous highest figure was 43 in 2005). The public's craving for change was also reflected in the number of first-time Diet members. This year, there were 158 such "new faces" from all parties (143 from the DPJ, 15 from other parties), making up almost one-third of the Lower House. Hereditary candidates, a common and accepted part of the Japanese political landscape particularly under LDP rule, also found their status being challenged. Of the 133 candidates who came from political families, just 75 of them, or 15.6% of the entire Lower House, won. In 2005, the equivalent figure was 24.6%.

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Large Number of DPJ Winners Have Close U.S. Ties
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¶7. (C) Large numbers of DPJ veterans and newcomers who have close ties to the United States and good relations with Embassy Tokyo were elected. For example, in addition to DPJ President and expected Prime Minister Hatoyama—who has strong personal ties to the United States, including graduate work at Stanford—other DPJ "America hands" returned to their seats on August 30 include Vice President Seiji Maehara, Akihisa Nagashima (DPJ Deputy Secretary-General, former Council of Foreign Relations Fellow, and SAIS alum), Shu Watanabe (DPJ Deputy Secretary-General, Columbia alum), and Yoshinori Suematsu (Chairman of the Lower House Committee on Youth Affairs, Princeton alum). Newcomers with U.S. experience include Mieko Nakabayashi (former Senate staffer), Takako

Ebata (MIT grad, who defeated LDP heavyweight Yuriko Koike), Toshiro Ishii (UPenn grad school) and Yasuhiro Okada (Harvard grad school).

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Post-Election LDP
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¶ 18. (C) Sunday's election was also notable because of the LDP heavyweights who went down, many to much younger and less experienced challengers. Former Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu, former LDP Vice President Taku Yamasaki, former Finance Minister Shoichi Nakagawa, former Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma, former Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama, and LDP General Council Chairman Takashi Sasagawa all lost in their single-seat districts and were not on the LDP's list for proportional representation seats (some due to party regulations concerning age). Also out of the Lower House after Sunday is Akihiro Ota, the leader of the New Komeito, the LDP's coalition partner and supporter of various alliance, security-related initiatives.

¶ 19. (C) A number of LDP members who lost in their single-seat districts, however, will continue their political careers in the Lower House thanks to their double candidacies (their names being on both the single-seat list as well as on their party's proportional representation list). Such "lucky losers" include Finance Minister Kaoru Yosano, Internal Affairs and Communications Minister Tsutomu Sato, Education Minister Ryu Shionoya, Consumer Affairs Minister Seiko Noda, Disaster Management Minister Motoo Hayashi, Administrative Reform Minister Akira Amari, former Defense Minister Yuriko

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Koike, former Farm Minister Tsutomu Takebe, former Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura, former Finance Minister Bummei Ibuki, and former LDP Secretary General Hidenao Nakagawa.

¶ 10. (C) Winning in their single-seat districts-but not having an easy time of it-were three former prime ministers: Yoshiro Mori, Shinzo Abe, and Yasuo Fukuda. Prime Minister Taro Aso was similarly able to avoid a humiliating defeat in his single-seat district. Despite his parliamentary victory, however, Aso announced the day after the election that he would step down as LDP President to take responsibility for his party's defeat. Although his term ends on September 30, Aso has indicated that he will hold a poll to determine the LDP's next president after Japan's next Prime Minister is elected at the upcoming special session of the Diet.

¶ 11. (C) Despite its current political misfortunes, the LDP will likely still play a significant role in Japanese politics and bilateral relations, although for now in the unfamiliar role of the opposition party. The defeat or retirement of many senior members has created an opportunity for a new generation of LDP politicians to reconnect with voters, and Aso has stressed the importance of listening to the views of local supporters in order for the LDP to be reborn. Turmoil within the party, however, may hinder a swift reorganization. Like Aso, LDP Secretary General Hiroyuki Hosoda has stated that he will resign, leaving a leadership vacuum and no obvious candidates to fill it. It also is unclear what role factions, an institution that has traditionally determined party leadership and policy direction, will play in the LDP should Japanese politics evolve into a two-party system.

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The New DPJ Government
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¶ 12. (U) Having won the election, the DPJ will now focus on putting together its government as soon as it can. According to press reports, Hatoyama and other DPJ executives began talks on their transition to power as early as Sunday evening and the Prime Minister-to-be is expected to soon launch a

transition team to pick more officials as well as enter into talks with coalition partners SDP and PNP on areas of cooperation and joint strategy. The transition team is likely to consist of candidates for major posts, including Chief Cabinet Secretary and Finance Minister, and will seek to consult with members of the current Aso Cabinet as well as senior bureaucrats on both administrative and substantive issues. Despite concern by some that the current regime will be obstructive as the new government attempts to get settled in, Aso has been gracious in defeat and pledged cooperation with the DPJ in implementing policies that would benefit the people of Japan. In fact, the LDP recently announced that it would hold its party presidential election after the new Prime Minister is chosen, meaning that LDP members will nominate Taro Aso as their prime ministerial choice, a wasted vote. This tactic, however, serves two purposes: it will allow the LDP time to consult with local party chapter heads on the new party president; and, it will ensure that the LDP's own party president selection does not get in the way of the election of Japan's new Prime Minister. By party regulation, the LDP's presidential election must take place sometime from ten days before the expiration of the current president's term, which is September 30.

¶13. (U) One of the first issues the DPJ transition team will have to work with the current government on is when to hold the required special session of the Diet. On the first day of this session, a Lower House plenary session is held to elect a new Speaker and Vice Speaker, designate seating for Lower House members, select Steering Committee members, and nominate a new Prime Minister. A minimum of three days after this Lower House plenary session, the opening ceremony of the Diet's special session is held at the Upper House. The newly elected Speaker presides over this ceremony and the Emperor

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officially calls the session into order. Once sworn in by the Emperor, the Prime Minister is able to officially appoint his/her ministers designate.

¶14. (SBU) Both media reports and Embassy DPJ contacts have indicated that the new DPJ Cabinet is likely to be in place by the week of September 14 at the latest. If the new Japanese Prime Minister plans on attending the senior-level meeting at the UN on climate change on September 22, giving a speech at UNGA on September 23-24, and participating in the Pittsburgh Summit on September 24-25, the new Cabinet would have to be formed by that week, if not sooner. SEE REFTEL C.

¶15. (C) Timing and scheduling are not the only issues the DPJ will face in the immediate future. Obstacles to maintaining party unity and managing the Diet will also test the new government. The increase of DPJ Lower House members from 113 to 308 means the DPJ will rely on inexperienced politicians to implement its policies. This could prove particularly difficult since the DPJ has promised to increase the role of politicians (at the expense of bureaucrats) in the policy process. DPJ President Hatoyama addressed this concern by saying that many new Diet members had served in the Diet previously and that the DPJ had many experienced legislators in the Upper House. Embassy contacts, however, have expressed some concern about inexperienced politicians in the Lower House and government ministries.

¶16. (C) Another complication for the DPJ is what role former DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa will play in the new administration. Ozawa hand-picked and supported many of the new candidates who led the DPJ to electoral victory. These approximately 100 Diet members, nicknamed "the Ozawa Children," are expected to join Ozawa's group, which is already the largest in the party. Although Ozawa has stated that he will follow the orders of DPJ President Hatoyama, analysts have speculated that a "dual-power structure" may emerge within the party. Hatoyama has said that he will have the final say on decisions and that he has "no intention of giving a free hand to Mr. Ozawa regarding the management of

the party." Hatoyama, however, recognizes Ozawa's skill in organizing campaigns and winning elections, and wants Ozawa's help in next year's critical Upper House election. How Hatoyama employs Ozawa in his administration will be the key to stability within the DPJ.

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